



## Southwest Coordinating Group



**March 15, 2004**

## 2004 Wildland Fire Season Memorandum

**Directed to:** New Mexico Coordinating Groups

**From:** Chair, Southwest Coordinating Group

**Topic/Issue:** State-wide Prescribed Fire Smoke Coordination

**Reply Due Date:** **5/03/2004**

As most of you know, New Mexico has recently replaced the Smoke Management Memorandum of Understanding and permit system with regulations covering smoke emissions from prescribed fires. The State of New Mexico, Environment Division, Air Quality Bureau has notified the land management agencies that they would prefer if we coordinated smoke emissions among ourselves, though they will handle the coordination if necessary. The Southwest Coordinating Group (SWCG) is requesting the Zone Coordinating Groups to develop both intra-zone and inter-zone smoke coordination procedures.

Currently the New Mexico Air Quality Bureau (NMAQB) has no standards or parameters that cover the amount of smoke that may be produced by multiple simultaneous projects within an air shed. Recognizing this, we must still acknowledge the political realities that we will confront if communities are significantly impacted because of multiple smoke-producing projects. Zone smoke coordination plans should strive to avoid significant smoke events from planned ignitions and fire use, yet remain flexible enough to incorporate standards as they are developed. The NMAQB will be closely observing the smoke situation state-wide to develop data and set and implement standards in the future.

A meeting of SWCG and Zone representatives took place in Albuquerque on March 10, 2004 to discuss the issues, potential procedures, conflict resolutions, and documentation requirements for smoke coordination in the New Mexico. The group identified a number of essential elements for Zone smoke coordination plans, and set a tentative due date for Zone Coordinating Groups to submit their plan to the SWCG. The Zones should develop their plans to meet the local needs and circumstances, but addressing the essential elements identified by the group.

The group identified these elements:

- Smoke coordination should be both intra-zone and inter-zone. Smoke activities within one Zone can, and often do, affect other Zones. The smoke coordination plans must address this issue.
- Zone Coordinating Groups need to make a strong effort to include all the smoke producers in the coordination efforts. Agricultural, tribal, and private landowner activities will affect the Zone-wide smoke coordination, and the public may not make distinction between the sources of smoke.
- Zone agencies should meet at least annually and develop a list of all the agencies' and partners' projects.

- Zones should develop a coordination process that clearly outlines the procedures for prioritizing and coordinating prescribed fire and fire use projects within air sheds to prevent violations of air quality standards. Roles and responsibilities for the people involved need to be set forth in the plan.
- The plan should identify a central point of notification for the Zone agencies and partners to allow daily coordination of smoke-producing projects. The information needed for each project should be identified in the coordination plan. Currently the information required for smoke coordination – such as advance dates, exact location, and size of project - is not available on the NMAQB web site, so that will have to be provided to the central point of notification.
- The Zone smoke coordination plan should be submitted to Bill Waterbury, the SWCG Chair, for review and approval by May 3, 2004.

The meetings held to discuss smoke projects can and should serve as an opportunity to address other interagency business. Fuels and community assistance projects can be coordinated and interagency fire planning can be conducted.

**/s/ William C. Waterbury**

William C. Waterbury, 2004-2005 Chair, Southwest Coordinating Group